



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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DEQ awards \$7.38 Million in stimulus wastewater improvement funds to four municipalities

BATON ROUGE – On Friday, Nov. 6, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality awarded \$7,385,285 to four municipalities in northeast and central Louisiana. The municipalities were Urania in La Salle Parish (\$1,581,643); West Monroe in Ouachita Parish (\$4,750,000); Sicily Island in Catahoula Parish (\$525,992); and Clayton in Concordia Parish (\$527,651). This represents the first four of the 55 awards that the department will be issuing.

DEQ received approximately \$43 million from the U.S. EPA as part of the federal stimulus package for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, also known as CWSRF, to support wastewater improvement and “green infrastructure” projects.

“We’re using this money to address wastewater treatment concerns across the entire state,” said DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett. “We know by the number of applications we received that the wastewater infrastructure throughout the state, and the nation for that matter, is in dire need of repair. Since that issue is a top priority, we made a concerted effort to get funding to those municipalities that met the criteria set by the department.”

To ensure the benefits from the stimulus package were felt statewide, the department looked at compliance issues and regional diversity to ensure there would be widespread sewer system improvements across the state. The department also looked at projects where there was a possibility to eliminate any imminent threats to human health or the environment. Financial constraints were also taken under consideration. Communities that did not have the ability to repay loans were targeted. The average median household income for the 55 selected municipalities is \$22,785; well below the state’s median household income. Additionally, DEQ considered criteria involving project cost, population served, requested amount, a community’s ability to assume additional debt, and projects that would provide economic recovery.

The federal stimulus package allows states to keep up to four percent of their award. The DEQ opted to keep none of the allowable administrative set-aside dollars; choosing instead to direct the stimulus funds to support wastewater improvement projects across the state.

The 55 selected municipalities across 42 parishes do not have to repay their “loan awards” because the DEQ is allowing the 55 recipient municipalities to receive a zero percent interest loan with 100 percent principal forgiveness. However, each of the 55 recipients must go through the standard loan process, since the CWSRF program is not set up to offer grants.